



[United States Denies Visa Entry for Palestinian President Abbas and 80 Members of His Delegation in Violation of the U.S. Agreement with the United Nations](#)

The Trump administration's move in recent weeks to deny visa entry to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and around 80 other officials from the Palestinian Authority has prompted an array of criticism. Observers have been quick to point out that the decision violates international obligations and the United States' longstanding commitment as a host country of the United Nations (UN) to allow delegates access to the UN General Assembly. Under the terms of the 1947 Headquarters Agreement, the U.S. is required to facilitate access for all accredited foreign delegates to the UN. Thus, legal experts and many global leaders have referenced how barring Palestinian officials including Abbas from attending the UN General Assembly meetings in New York is a direct breach of the agreement – and in turn, international law and the core principles of the UN. It also prevents Palestinian officials from exercising the right to make their voice heard at what are intended to be universal diplomatic forums like the United Nations.

In response to the visa denials, the European Union (EU) called on the State Department to reconsider its decision, with top EU officials urging the U.S. to uphold existing agreements between it and the UN. Other European leaders, including ones from France and Spain, relayed similar sentiments as well. They emphasized that access to neutral spaces dedicated to the promotion of peace such as the UN headquarters should not be restricted and that Palestinian delegates have the right to attend and speak at international diplomatic forums. Obstructing their ability to do so is a blatant violation of international law and the aforementioned UN Headquarters Agreement given that the latter stipulates entry cannot be denied to officials invited to attend UN sessions. Additionally, it undermines the UN's purpose as a means of bringing all nation states together irrespective of any potential politicized factors or considerations. Regrettably, the U.S. has a history of violating their agreement with the UN, as this is not the first time that this type of action has been initiated against Palestinian officials. In 1988, the United States under the Reagan administration denied then Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Yasser Arafat an entry visa to address the UN General Assembly in New York. This sparked universal criticism and prompted the UN General Assembly to vote to move its session from New York to Geneva so that Arafat could address it. The decision to relocate served as a major rebuke to the Reagan administration's unlawful action.

In this latest instance, there are clearly cynical motivations behind the move to block Palestinian officials from attending the UN General Assembly. The decision is intentionally timed to disrupt the international momentum and push for increased Palestinian statehood recognition, as a plethora of further countries including France, Australia, Belgium, Canada, and the United Kingdom have recently expressed plans for this. Israeli officials are believed to have encouraged their American counterparts under the Trump administration to deny visas for the Palestinian delegation in meetings prior to the action being initiated. The goal of those backing this is undoubtedly to hinder the Palestinian liberation movement on the international stage. All of this comes amid growing global condemnation of Israel's repeated war crimes and human rights violations in both Gaza and the occupied West Bank – which have prompted the new wave of calls for the recognition of Palestinian statehood. An international summit regarding this issue, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, is slated to take place later this month in September.

The decision to deny visa entries for the Palestinian delegation is dangerous. Analysts have labeled it as illegal interference with the norms and established rules of diplomatic engagement and international law. Israel's widely criticized conduct has organically led to its increased international diplomatic isolation, and therefore, the Trump administration's measures to shield Israel from the ramifications of this are unjust.